



Diversity Task Group

Date: Monday, November 4, 2019
Time: 6:45-9:00pm
Location: Jefferson Cutter House, 611 Massachusetts Ave, Lower Level

Minutes

Attendees: Michaiah, Katell, Kelly, Beth, Louise, Brooks, Maren, Jane, Jill, Michael, Mona, Lynette, Edith, Rajeev, Joanne, Robin

- 1) Jane Lynch: Presentation on VISIONS Training Framework. Jane offered a 30-minute overview of the guidelines that VISIONS uses when facilitating trainings and community dialogue.

Guidelines:

- Try On (you may or not may adopt ideas in the end)
- It's okay to disagree
- It is not okay to blame, shame, or attack – self or others
- Practice “self-focus” (Use 'I' statements and speak for yourself, or name the group you're speaking for, rather than saying 'we'; also notice what is happening in yourself to trigger feelings, so that you're not reactive)
- Notice both process and content
- Practice “both/and” thinking (more than one thing can be true; can be especially hard for those in privileged groups. It helps to look for common ground.)
- Be aware of intent and impact (Impact trumps intent, it's not an excuse to say you didn't mean it. My job is to say “tell me more, help me understand.”)
- Maintain confidentiality

The group discussed which of these are easier for people to use and which are more challenging to use. We talked about whether these might be adopted for the DTG to follow and how this could model other discussions in town.

- 2) Approval of October Minutes: The minutes were approved.
- 3) School Issues Update
 - a) DIG Meet and Greet Potluck was held on November 3 with about 50 families and lots of food donated by Foodlink. There was a performance by True Story Theatre. The event was supported by DTG, HRC, and Martin Luther King committee.
 - b) Superintendent's District Advisory Group: Current needs that were discussed include: more data on the proportion of disciplined students who are POC. Also several attendees shared that Black students in Arlington are scoring lower than average in math on the standardized

tests (MCAS) than all other groups; this is compared to the state average. There was much discussion about how there is a problem in the Arlington school system and how best to discern where the issues stem from. It was suggested that someone email Rod about this concern and what next steps could be. It would be helpful to have more information from the Super's group and from Rod about whether there has been progress on the plan he mentioned last year. Action Step: Invite Rod to a future DTG meeting, Mona and Joanne will follow up.

- c) METCO: It was noted that students do not like to be identified other than Arlington public school students, so please do not refer to them as METCO students. Michaiah will be connecting DIG liaisons with the program director, Margaret Credle-Thomas.
- 4) Town Issues
- a) Arlington Reads: Used ranked voting to identify a theme, and clear choice was Puerto Rico. There will be several books, including a children's book.
 - b) Petition Updates: Powerful message to Select Board when DTG signed on because it was the first town group to do so. Seemed to be a shift after that. Those active in this have met with Select Board members to decide how to have a community forum. At last Select Board meeting, 27 people spoke about this. The Town Manager has agreed to all requests in the petition, and the BOS now seems to have shifted from being defensive to more open and listening. Town-wide forum is set for November 17.
 - c) Rainbow Commission: Grant from Boston-area Pride to put on community events, picnic in June is a big one. Goal is to have the LGBTQIA community represented in all that Arlington does.
- 5) DTG Goals for the Year: There was discussion about how we set doable goals for the DTG, with some reference to the SWAT analysis that was done in the spring. Questions included:
- a) Could we form subcommittees so that there is some continuity throughout, and ongoing action steps.
 - b) How do we refine the goals for 5 years and one year? This is like the exercise we did in the spring already.
 - c) Are we clear on our mission? Examples: training, sharing information, campaigns, influence town policy, etc. What is the basic purpose of the DTG? Our mission that was written 4 years ago states raising awareness, teaching, and taking action.
 - d) Do we need to think about "being" more vs "doing"? How do we form relationships, interact with, and support others?
 - e) There is an inherent tension because people dip in and out, and there aren't specific projects unless someone takes it up and moves it. Historically, things get done when there is a hot-button issue and people get action-oriented.
 - f) Where is the road map?
 - g) Do we want to have a subcommittee to discuss how we move forward: Brooks, Joanne, Lynette, and Katell agreed to meet to explore this further and will report back to the larger group.
- 6) Brief discussion on affordable housing in Arlington and redevelopment. Beth spoke to this and Kelly gave an overview on how the Town is addressing this issue, emphasizing that the Town struggles to hear from residents.